

Autobiography of a Pioneer

By

L. W. LEE

Valley View, Texas

August 10th, 1914



Graff

The Newberry Library

The Everett D. Graff Collection
of Western Americana

2443

Autobiography of a Pioneer

By

L. W. LEE

Valley View, Texas

August 10th, 1914



At the request of several of the children and relatives of my old comrades, who crossed the plains with me, I have written this little history of my life. Unfortunately no record of any kind was kept of the California trips, so I have had to depend entirely on my memory. If there should be mistakes as to dates or events, I trust the readers will remember my advanced age and overlook them.

L. W. LEE.





WAS BORN in Howard County, Missouri, October 27, 1831. When I was six years old my parents moved to Cooper County, where I spent my childhood days.

In 1849 the great rush to California for gold began, but I was too young to go, but the following spring, 1850, I persuaded my father to let me try my luck in the New Eldorado. A company under Bird D. Parks, my brother-in-law, was about ready to start, so I lost no time in joining them. Our neighbors who had gone to California the year before, sent back word to load light, so our cooking utensils were a coffee pot, frying pan, bread pan, tin cup and butcher knife. Our food supply consisted of flour, bacon, navy beans, and onions.

We decided before we reached our destination that we had loaded a little too light, as we came too close to starvation for real comfort.

We had twenty-four men in our company and eight wagons, drawn by ox teams, and on April 26, 1850, we crossed the western state line of Missouri into the then called "Great American Desert," which was inhabited by Indians, buffaloes, bears and prairie dogs. As we crossed the state line a very depressing feeling came over us, as if we were leaving home forever. Occasionally some one would try to say something funny or sing "The Girl I Left Behind Me," but his utter failure was all the fun there was in it. Our first drive was to Kaw river, where we camped three of four days, as the grazing was very good and our supply of feed had given out. When our oxen had recuperated we started on, reaching Platte river in a cold, drizzling rain, fuel all wet and not much chance for a fire. About seventy-five yards out in the river was a little island, where we hoped to find enough dry wood to start a fire, I being a good swimmer, offered to swim across and see what I could find. I shed my clothes and plunged into the river, which proved to be about ankle deep and caused loud laughs and cheers from my comrades. We soon got together a few dry willows and built a big fire, which greatly revived our somewhat dampened spirits.

After our scanty meal we all joined in singing the most popular song of that time:

CALIFORNIA.

Come all ye poor men of the North,
Who are toiling for your lives,
Just to support your families,
Your children and your wives;
There are easier ways of gaining wealth
Than toiling night and day,
Go out and dig the gold that lies
In California.

The fairest of all countries
That lie beneath the sun,
The lofty trees go towering high
And noble rivers run
Beneath the shade of every tree,
Among the flowers so gay
'Tis there we'll dig the gold that lies
In California.

On every lofty mountain,
On every sunny plain,
The gold dust lies glittering
Like dew drops after rain;
Beneath the sparkling waters,
As they glide to the sea,
It's there we'll dig the gold that lies
In California.

Why should this noble country
By Indians be run o'er,
While many of you are starving
And many more are poor;
Come, rise and with new energy,
And without more delay,
Just go and dig the gold that lies
In California.

We knew and sang an endless lot of songs, from the sublime to the ridiculous. The following one, composed on the way out in honor of the girls we left behind us, will show that we had the saving sense of humor, even if our poetry was a little faulty. I used the name of Mary as that suited my particular case. The others substituted Sallie or Betsy, according to their liking:

Fare you well, pretty Mary, I bid you adieu,
My heart it is breaking o'er the leaving of you,
It is not the long journey that I value one straw,
Or leaving my country, for the money I owe,
The thought that doth grieve me and trouble my mind
Is leaving my true love, pretty Mary, behind.

The ships on the ocean may run without sail,
The smallest of fishes may grow to be whales,
In the middle of the ocean may grow a green tree,
If I ever prove false to the girl that loves me.

The next day we passed near Fort Kearney, where we mailed some letters home and bought the St. Louis Republican, which we read eagerly, even the advertisements. We followed the Platte river for days and days. We had a great deal of trouble crossing it on account of the quicksand. We were obliged to double up our teams and take one wagon across at a time. The constantly shifting quicksand gave the same motion to the wagon as if we were running over rocks. Often when we camped for the night, we would first dig a well and would strike water within a few feet of the surface.

About the second week out we passed through Ash Hollow, a troublesome canon, where we were obliged to rough lock each wagon and all hands would take hold and pull back to keep the wagon from running on to the oxen. Near this point we passed the place where Gen. Kearney had had a battle with the Indians. We could see the bodies of several dead Indians tied far up in the tree tops. They had been placed there by the surviving Indians, that being a form of burial peculiar to that particular tribe.

It was a grewsome sight and we didn't tarry long but travelled on toward Fort Laramie.

One day we heard a rumbling noise and the clatter of horses' feet. Ever on the alert for any possible danger, we grabbed our guns and waited for what we supposed to be an attack by Indians. It turned out to be a troop of soldiers running a buffalo cow which they killed within a short distance of us. After they had taken all the meat they wanted they generously gave us the rest, but requested us not to report them at Fort Laramie, as they would be reprimanded for running their horses unnecessarily. The fresh buffalo meat was a treat for us, and that night's feast was one of the joyful occasions among the many gloomy ones. The following day we resumed our journey along the North Platte. We reached a ferry consisting of two flat boats. We thought the price for ferrying exorbitant and decided to have them take our wagons over and we would swim the oxen. We put them in the water about nine o'clock in the morning, but the river was so swift and cold they would swim down the stream and out on the same side. After working with them all day unsuccessfully, we came back to the ferry and had them taken over at the ferryman's own price. The next morning we struck the trail again, but felt the effect of our hard day's work in the cold water.

We next reached Sweet Water river, then across South Pass to the Pacific Springs, whose waters finally reach the Pacific ocean. When we crossed Big Sandy river we filled our kegs with water and prepared to cross a fifty mile desert, this we did without unyoking an ox. Along this drive two Germans and myself were taken sick with mountain fever. When we reached Green River they carried the Germans out to the ferry and came back for me, but when they took me out of the wagon and the hot sun struck me I fainted, so they put me back. When I regained consciousness I heard a great commotion and everybody shouting "Cut the ropes! cut the ropes!" I learned afterwards that one end of the ferry boat went under water and the sick Germans floated off down stream. They were rescued, though everyone supposed they

would die from the exposure, but instead they began to improve and were soon well. I too, fully recovered, but was very ill for several weeks. Our next point of interest was Soda Springs, located in what is now the southeast corner of Idaho. One of the springs would slowly rise and fall as if it was some living, breathing thing. Another threw its water twelve or fifteen feet in the air. Here we took the left hand road, called "Sublet's Cut Off." We went down a very steep mountain to Goose creek. It took us all day long to go down the mountain and we reached a camping place very tired and hungry. One of our men, Ryley Stockley, was staking out the oxen and stumbled over a dead Indian. Upon investigation we found he had been shot and we were very loath to camp where there had evidently been such recent trouble between the whites and Indians, but we too tired to go further that night and went to bed not knowing whether we would wake up with our scalps on or not. Captain Parks, however, ordered a double guard for the night. We were not disturbed and the following morning went on our way with fairly good roads from this point to the head of the Humboldt river. One night we struck camp and I was helping get supper, Captain Parks and the rest had gone on a little further with the oxen to better grass. A fine looking man, riding a good horse and leading another, came into camp and asked if we could keep him over night. He said he had plenty of money, but all the money in the world couldn't keep a man from starving to death under some circumstances. There was nothing for him to buy if he had had a million. I told him we were on half rations ourselves, but to wait and see Captain Parks about it. After talking with him awhile I found out he was Dave Enyart, from Cooper County, Missouri, and his brother had married my sister. Of course we allowed him to stay, and by each fellow eating a little less than he actually needed, we were able to accommodate our guest. He rode away the next morning the most grateful man I ever saw and promised to meet us at the Humboldt Meadows that night. We followed soon and reached the meadows about sundown. Imagine our surprise and delight to see rushing towards us this man with his arms full of red,

juicy meat he had bought from some speculators who had killed a beef. No doubt he paid two dollars a pound for it, perhaps more, but refused to take a cent from us. I came to know then and have found it so in all conditioins of life, that a kindness shown a fellow man in trouble is pretty sure to be returned to you in some way. The next afternoon about three o'clock, we started across the Humboldt desert, all happy, full of fun, and good beef, not realizing at all the troubles we would encounter. We traveled all night. About 9 o'clock the next morning we saw ahead of us in the distance a beautiful lake of water. We shouted for joy and hurried on, but we never got any nearer. We found out afterwards that it was a mirage, though none of us had ever heard of such a thing before. Near this point in the desert we witnessed one of the saddest sights of the trip. Captain Parks and I were walking ahead of the wagons, when we saw near the road an emigrant train of five wagons. The men and women were crying and praying, so we went up to see what was the trouble. There in the shade of the wagon was a very sick young man, a consumptive, whose family had started with him to California, hoping the change would benefit him, but here on the hot desert, twenty-five miles from water, he was dying. Captain Parks and I walked slowly back to our own wagons, both wishing we had not seen him, as we were unable to give any assistance, and it was one of the tragedies of the desert we could never efface from our memories.

I think it was the hottest day I ever experienced and about noon we struck the deep sand. Our oxen stopped, moaned and lowed, and we could not move them, though we whipped and shouted at them. We unyoked and let them rest until sunset, then leaving two or three men to guard the wagons, the rest of us started with the oxen to Carson river, still twelve miles away. When we got within two miles of the river, the oxen lifted up their heads, sniffed the air and began to go a little faster. The nearer they got to the river the faster they went. Grazing too, was good around the river, so we waited until the following afternoon, when we started back for the wagons. The oxen, feeling very much rested, made

the trip in very good time. There must have been a great deal of suffering along the twelve miles by both stock and men, for all along the road were dead oxen, mules and horses, deserted wagons, etc. Many emigrants would swap wagons with the desert to get a better or lighter one. Warm drinking water sold for a dollar a gallon. We were obliged to buy a small amount at that price. When we reached the Carson river we camped for several days, and here one of our men, Ran Mahan, who had been sick for several weeks, died. We dug a grave, wrapped him in his blanket, gather around with heavy hearts and laid to rest one of our favorite comrades, a brave and noble man, who faced death as he had always faced life, manfully and unafraid.

From this point we traveled up the Carson river to the summit of the Sierra Nevada mountains by Carson City, which was a flattened pine log with a few bottles of low grade whiskey on it. Bad as it was, the whiskey sold for fifty cents a drink, and many drank it, instead of buying bread, which they so badly needed. I have seen men beg for a biscuit from little stands along the road, only to be sworn at and refused by the owners. After traveling for several days along rough and ragged mountain roads we reached Placerville, then called Hangtown. We had very good roads from there to Sacramento, which we reached August 22nd, having been on the road four months.

We sold our oxen and wagons and began to scatter and seek employment. Six of us stayed together for some time. We got a job moving lumber, which we finished in one day and got ten dollars apiece. We were greatly encouraged, but such jobs were scarce. Finding no other work in the city, with all the worldly goods I possessed on my back and with my ten dollars in my pocket, I started for the mines and asked every man I met or saw for employment. On arriving at the Mississippi bar on the American fork of the Sacramento river, I obtained employment by agreeing to work for half wages, as they said I was only a boy.

There were three mine owners, George Calvin, David McBride and William Roberts, and when Saturday night came

we all gathered around a long table to be paid off. When they came to me, Mr. Calvin said: "I have watched this boy work, he has worked as hard as any man and I am in favor of paying him full wages," the others agreed and so I received my money. I could not keep back the tears as I thanked them for their kindness, and needless to say, I have always had the most tender memory of those three good men. Not long after this I met Captain Bird Parks again. He was going back to Missouri by ship to Panama, across the Isthmus, and then to New York, and offered to pay my way if I would accompany him, but I told him I could never go back a pauper, so bade him good-bye and he went on his way. Years afterwards he told me of the terrible experiences of that voyage. They were shipwrecked. He and several others reached an island, where they lived for days on herbs, wild berries and lizzards. Parks himself always caught the lizzards, probably because he was such a good runner, for there was never a lizzard that could outrun Bird Parks.

After working in the mines until I had saved sufficient money to buy tools and provisions for the winter, my brother, two cousins, Captain Johnson and myself, formed a partnership and went to mining for ourselves. In the spring of 1851 we were able to buy two wagons with teams, and started a store in a tent on the Cossumes river, keeping a restaurant and selling mining supplies also. This paid us well and we continued the business until the spring of 1852, when we sold out and put up a notice in Sacramento that we were recruiting men to cross the plains to Missouri with pack mules.

In a short time we had a company of thirty men and started on our homeward journey, with Captain Johnson as our captain and myself first lieutenant. At this season of the year, owing to the deep snow on the Sierra Nevada mountains, no wagons could be taken across, so each man had a pack mule and provisions for sixty days, just enough to carry us through without any allowance for accidents or delays. Every man had to depend on good health and a sure-footed mule. To be left was to be killed by the Indians, to lay over was to all starve together. They were trying to open up a

new route over the mountains to Carson City, and a mountaineer named Johnson, with a Delaware Indian, offered to pilot us over the new route if we would recommend it to the emigrants we met on our way home. So we started out over the mountains through deep, heavy snow. We went ahead, tramping out a path for our mules until we were high up the mountains, where the snow would bear the weight of the mules. But in some places, generally over a creek or stream, the snow would be melted and a mule would break through, sometimes going out of sight, but we would put our picket ropes around him and haul him out. A Mr. Nance had his collar bone broken in such a fall, but he was grit to the backbone, and answered promptly to roll call. William Lockridge, a Cooper county man, also met with a painful accident. He accidentally shot himself through the hand, but he too had the nerve to continue the march. We were traveling along very comfortably when our Indian pilot sent word along down the line that he had become confused about the trail, and for us to stand still until he could go a little ahead and get his bearings, when he would fire off his gun for us to follow. Almost breathless, we waited for his signal, and in about thirty minutes we were greatly relieved to hear the gun shot and began to march ahead. We soon came up to the pilot and Johnson, who were standing on the edge of the mountain. Johnson told us we would have to go down and reach the valley by camping time, as it would be dangerous to camp up where we were in the deep snow. The mules could not walk down at this steep point, the only way being to push them off and let them slide until they could regain their footing and walk. We all gathered around and looked at the steep precipice very dubiously. "It can't be done," was our decision. The guide was a man of few words. "It has to be done," was all he said, and without further argument we pushed over the first mule. Down he went, finally reaching a footing further down the side of the mountain, quite shaken up but with no bones broken; then we pushed off the rest and much to our surprise, we all got safely down without the loss of a single man or mule. Adam Lee had courage enough left to laugh and say: "Well, this experience will do

to tell our children and grandchildren." Another man, not quite so optimistic, said: "We will never get home alive, much less have any children and grandchildren." But he, with many of the rest of us, lived to fulfil the prophecy made by Adam Lee.

We adjusted our packs and formed in line, reaching Lake Valley about sunset. Here we camped for the night, tired and weary. About twelve o'clock the guard waked us up, told us it was snowing and the mules were shivering with cold after their hard day's travel. Every man got up at once and put his sleeping blanket on his mule. We built up a big, roaring fire and stayed up the rest of the night to care for our mules. We had to save them in order that they might save us.

The next day's travel was not quite so hard, though we passed many places where a single mis-step would have landed a Christian in heaven and a sinner in hell. Not being perfectly sure which way we were classified we stuck close to the trail. Early in the afternoon the pilots sent back word along the line that we would be down in Carson valley in two hours. We shouted for joy. By sunset we reached the valley, and the tall green grass, waving in the breeze, we thought the most beautiful sight we had ever seen. Carson City had improved very much since we had camped there two years before. It was now a one-room house and a large corral of pine logs, twelve or fifteen feet high. The men who owned the property were glad to see us and to hear from the outside world, after having been shut in all winter. The next morning we made up some money for our pilots, bade them good-bye and started out on a better traveled road with good grass on either side.

One night as we camped along the Humboldt river, we captured a very old, decrepit half-naked Indian. Some thought he was a spy, others that he was sick and had gone out in the willows to die. We put out a strong guard that night, pointed to some blankets for him to sleep on, which he did, but the next morning he was gone and not a trace of him could we find.

Every night after that, until we began to meet the emigrants, we could see great lights on the mountains, which was

a sign to the Indians that the enemy was in their country. We never saw a white man until we got about half way to Missouri, except Kit Carson. We met him on the plains with a big drove of sheep, which he had wintered in Utah. Our trip home, while not so hard as the one out two years before, was filled with hardships and adventures. One exciting time was during a terrific wind and rain storm, when our mules stampeded and drifted away with the storm. Four of our men were guarding them and stayed near them through it all, and brought them safely back after the storm was over. Too much cannot be said in praise of those men, who stuck to their post of duty in the face of one of the worst storms I ever experienced.

Another thrilling adventure was crossing the Big Blue river. It was wide and still and deep, but I told Captain Johnson I would swim across and the mules would follow, if I could ride Mr. Wilson's big yellow horse. So with a good stock whip in my hand, I started across on the horse and they pushed the mules in after me. About half way across the mules overtook me and began to mill around me. I slashed right and left with my whip and urged the horse on. The men on the bank began to shout at me and tell me what to do, when Captain Johnson raised his hand and demanded absolute silence. I made it alright, but to have all those mules after me in the middle of the river scared me worse than anything I had experienced on the whole trip.

We now began to meet emigrants quite frequently. One train proved to be some of our closest neighbors, the Allison boys, but we only stopped a few minutes to talk, though we would have been glad to talk for hours. We also met Neal and Garl Maupin, from Howard county, with a large drove of sheep. They told us to pick out the best mutton sheep in their herd. We picked out a fine one, dressed it and had for supper the first fresh meat we had tasted since leaving Sacramento. A little later we had fresh buffalo meat, as my brother ran his mule into a herd of buffalo and killed one. This, too, was a great treat

When we neared the Missouri line our party began to separate, each taking the nearest route home. When we reached a little village about where Kansas City now stands, the two Ralston boys, my brother and myself were all there were left of our big crowd. We each bought a new suit of clothes, threw away our old ones and started for Clinton, in Henry County. Here we were received with a hearty welcome by relatives of the Ralston boys. We stopped next day with my sister and her husband, Bird Parks. Many were the laughs and jokes as we talked nearly all night about our trip to California. The next day we reached our own home. Humble though it was, to us it was the fairest spot on earth. Realizing the advantage and need of a better education, the following fall I re-entered school, though I was a grown man. I applied myself most faithfully to my studies for several years. In the spring of 1857, several of my neighbors and best friends, came to me and wanted me to go again to California with them as captain of the train and drive a herd of cattle through, each putting in as many cattle as he could buy and paying in proportion to his number for feed and transportation charges. I accepted the proposition, put every cent I had into cattle, and by the middle of May I was again wending my way to the Pacific slope. The Indians were very troublesome that year. It was the year General A. S. Johnson marched his army to Salt Lake and of the Mountain Meadow massacre. Colonel Summers caught up with us on the Platte river, with a regiment of soldiers, and told us to let him know if we were disturbed by the Indians and he would send us protection. We traveled about as fast as he did, and camped near him several times, which gave us a very safe, comfortable feeling. They soon got ahead of us, however, and we were left to defend ourselves. One day I was riding a short distance ahead of the train to select a camping place, when two Indians raised up from the sage brush with their bows and arrows pointed at me. I drew my gun on them, but just then they saw the rest of my men coming over a little slope, which had hidden them. The Indians, seeing they were outnumbered, lowered their bows and began to make signs for mercy. My men rushed up and

wanted to kill them at once, but I feared that would get us into more trouble than if we let them alone, so I motioned my hand at them to go, and they lost no time in getting away. I think the Indians and myself felt equally pleased with the settlement of the situation. Another evening, I started out early to find a camping place. I found a nice, wide valley, but the thick willows growing along the river bank looked like too good a place for Indians to hide to suit me, so I suggested to the men when they came up that we fill our kegs with water and camp about half a mile away, more in the open, which we did. Captain Long's train, which was following, came along an hour or two later and camped at the river. Early the next morning one of his men came rushing to our camp for help, saying that the Indians were shooting at them from the willows. Four of my men went to their assistance. They killed one Indian and foolishly scalped him. When they returned to camp and told me what they had done, I said: "Well, boys, I am afraid you have done a very unwise thing and the best thing we can do is to get as far as we can from this place before night." We started immediately and made one of the longest drives we ever made, and it was well we did, for we learned afterwards that Captain Holloway's train, with whom we had become quite well acquainted along the route, camped at that place the following night and were every one killed by the Indians, except Mrs. Holloway, who was scalped and left for dead. She was found still alive by the next train of emigrants under Captain Roundtree.

He, together with others who came along, stopped long enough to bury the dead and took Mrs. Holloway along with his company to California, where she completely recovered.

Crossing the Humboldt desert this time was very hard on our cattle, some of them gave out, and we had to leave them, but most of them, after resting, came on to the river later, so our actual loss was very small. We rested the cattle here for several days, while Dick Eubank and myself went across the mountains muleback, with our blankets and provisions tied on behind us, to hunt a place to locate our cattle. We went the Big Tree route and slept on the stump of a tree

that had been leveled off and was used as a ball room by the aristocrats of California. When we reached Stockton we were very much surprised and elated to meet David P. Mahan, who had crossed the plains with me in 1850. He had never gone back since coming out and was so anxious for news of old Missouri that we talked all night.

Eubanks and myself crossed the San Joaquin river and found a camping place where there was plenty of good water, grass and wood. We crossed the mountains back to our cattle, which we found had improved wonderfully. We put them on the road at once, a rough and ragged road it was, but they were better able to stand it. We reached our new camp without further trouble, pitched a tent between two spreading oak trees, where we spent a very pleasant summer. Occasionally we would go into Stockton to a dance and tripped the light fantastic in our boots and spurs to the rollicking tune of—

“Buffalo girls, won't you come out tonight?

Won't you come out tonight?

Won't you come out tonight?

Buffalo girls, won't you come out to-night?

And dance by the light of the moon.”

We got our mail once a month, which of course was a great event. Sometimes we would stand in line for half an hour or more to get to the window, often to be told there was nothing for us. How we did wish the officious looking clerk would look once more, to be sure he hadn't overlooked something.

As soon as our cattle had fattened up a bit we began to sell our cows and heifers. They were better blooded than the native cattle and more gentle, so they brought better prices. As soon as a man would get his cattle all sold, he would start for home. I kept my steers and bought theirs. Finally they all went away and I was left alone in my tent under the trees. I whistled and watched my cattle grow to keep up my courage. I had few neighbors, and far apart, but all were courteous and kind. There was a Mr. Banta, from Henry County, Missouri, who lived nearest. He kept a hotel on the

Stockton and San Francisco road. He was a fine hunter and trapper. He killed several grizzly bears and captured two cubs. One day one of the cubs got away and I met him in the road. I was rather surprised, but threw a lariat on him and dragged him home. Mr. Banta sold the two cubs for fifty dollars apiece.

In the spring of 1859 I drove my cattle to San Francisco, where I sold them for a good price. While there I stopped at the What Cheer House, a well-known hotel among the miners and cattlemen of the early days. I decided to return home by way of Panama and New York, so took passage on a steamer that sailed out of Golden Gate about two o'clock in the afternoon with seven hundred passengers on board.

In about two hours the passengers began to get seasick, I among the number. Everybody ought to get seasick once in a life-time just for the feeling of relief that comes over you when you find you didn't die after all, when you knew so well that you would. We made a stop at Manzanita and at Acapulco, then we reached the Isthmus, anchored about half a mile out from Panama and were taken to land in small steamers.

The railroad across the Isthmus had just been finished and when we landed from the steamer we were marched to the train between two lines of tall black negro soldiers. We crossed the Isthmus to Aspinwall, the name since changed to Colon. Here we boarded the steamer Illinois, under Captain McCowan, and started for New York. The ships in those days had a propelling wheel on each side, and if too much weight was on one side it would lift the opposite wheel out of the water. This often happened when a passenger would sight a whale, or some point of interest, and the rest would rush to see. The captain or mate would quickly scatter a crowd until the ship would again be level.

We were near the West Indies when our main shaft broke and we drifted about with the current and the waves for four days. Of course, the passengers were very much alarmed and realized our danger, especially as our captain hardly ate or slept for four days. We were drifting towards some bad looking breakers on the island of Cuba, when they got one wheel

to running, and though badly crippled, were able to steer into Havana, passing in by old Morro Castle, with its guns pointed down at us.

We anchored in the bay at Havana for four days, when we were taken aboard the Grenada, under Capt Berryman. When we started off Captain McCowan came on the deck of his ship and threw an old shoe after us for good luck.

He was a grand, brave man, and we gave him cheer after cheer as we sailed away. Without further mishaps we reached New York, where I spent several days seeing the sights, then took the train for St. Louis. Stopped at the old Virginia Hotel while there. Another short trip from St. Louis and I was again with my friends and loved ones in the old home. The neighbors, hearing of my return, came over the following night and we had a general jubilee. The negro slaves tuned up their fiddles and banjos and all joined in the dance. Among the ones who came to welcome me home, there was one fairer than all the rest, Miss Mary Ann Fryer, who on November 1st, 1859, became my wife.

As a wedding present from my wife's mother we received a negro slave valued at about \$1,200. She was a loyal, faithful soul, who remained with us all during the war, though she refused many tempting offers of big wages to go with the army and cook for the soldiers.

At the beginning of the war I had several hundred dollars in gold, which gave me no end of trouble seeking for a safe place to hide it. I finally buried it in the hen house. The hogs got in and rooted it up and I found it scattered all around the yard. The gold excitement in California did not begin to equal the frantic search I made for that gold until I had it all safe again. After a consultation with my wife we decided to give the money to Mary, the negro woman. She kept it for us until the close of the war, which shows the confidence we had in her honesty. Of course, we had many trying experiences during the war. My horses were stolen, my house and barn burned, fences destroyed, and general desolation prevailed where my once pretty farm had been. Still undaunted, I built again and engaged in farming, stock raising,

etc., until 1869, when I sold out and moved to Texas, locating in the southern part of Cook county, where I still reside. Seeing the need of school facilities for my children in 1873, I laid off the town of Valley View, and gave away business and residence lots to anyone who would build a house and paint it white. Then, at my own expense, I built and furnished the first school house in this part of the country and provided the best teachers possible to obtain at that time. I have watched our little town grow from its infancy to its present population, 'ending a hand to every worthy cause. Here, with my good wife, I shall spend my remaining years. A few years ago we celebrated our golden wedding, surrounded by many near and dear relatives and friends.

We are comfortable and happy in the fact, that though life has brought us many hardships and sorrows, it has been more than balanced by many joys and pleasures. I am now nearly eighty-three years old, and as long as I have my present good health and activity I am glad indeed, to be here. If through illness or accident I become helpless and my life a burden to myself or others, I will be ready and glad to go.





